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Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands (colloquially, the Solomons) is a Pacific Islands Country (PIC) in the Melanesian sub-region roughly 2,000 miles northeast of Australia. Solomon Islands is a heterogenous society, with over 80 local languages among the over 800,000 inhabitants spread across 6 major islands. The Solomons has the third-largest Pacific Island economy but also is one of the most aid-reliant countries in the world.

Solomon Islands is strategically significant to U.S. Indo-Pacific interests due to its geographic location between several sea-lines of communication, including between the United States and Australia. Solomon Islands also is in close proximity to U.S. military installations in Micronesia, including U.S. Army Garrison Kwajalein and Guam, that are critical to U.S. regional defense posture. The Solomons was the site of the first offensive campaign by the United States in the Pacific during World War II. An estimated 1,600 U.S. servicemembers were killed in the 1943 campaign, and Solomon Islanders played an important role in the war effort. Unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the war remains buried throughout the country. In the post-war era, U.S. engagement with the Solomons waned. In 1993, the United States closed its embassy in the country as part of a deficit reduction plan; it was reestablished in 2023.

Over the past decade, the government of the Solomons has increased diplomatic and security ties with the People's Republic of China (China, or PRC), and switched official diplomatic relations from Taiwan (the Republic of China) to China in 2019. According to an Australian think tank, China is the Solomon Islands' second-largest official development financing partner accounting for roughly 19% of total ODF disbursements (behind Australia). Some Members of Congress have expressed concern that a 2022 security pact between the Solomons and China threatens U.S. strategic and diplomatic interests in the region.

Political History

Solomon Islands gained independence from British colonial administration in 1978 and formed a parliamentary constitutional monarchy under the British crown, holding Commonwealth Realm status. Since independence, politics have been punctuated by a weak state structure and endemic corruption, and public officials may rely upon traditional patronage networks to accumulate power outside of formal institutions. Membership in political parties is fluid, and there is a history of no-confidence votes in the parliament to challenge the prime minister's authority.

The Solomons comprises nine provinces and one capital territory in Honiara. Rifts between some provinces and the central government, as well as ethnic tensions among island groups, periodically have led to conflict. In 1998, long-simmering tensions between the peoples of the islands of Guadalcanal, home to Honiara, and Malaita, the country's

most populous province, erupted in civil war, with competing militias fighting for power. (The Solomon Islands has no standing military force.)

At the request of the government of Solomon Islands and under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum's (PIF's) 2000 Biketwawa Declaration, Australia led a 2003 Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a multinational peacekeeping and stabilization initiative. RAMSI remained operational until 2017, providing military, law enforcement, and development assistance.

Following RAMSI's wind-down and exit in 2017, then-Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare signed a security agreement with Australia to provide for rapid deployment of Australian security forces, at Honiara's request, in the case of civil conflict. Australia is the Solomon Islands' top aid partner and is estimated to provide \$170.9 million (AUD) between 2026 and 2027 in official development aid.

Figure 1. Solomon Islands at a Glance



Source: Congressional Research Service.

In May 2026, Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele was removed after two years in office following a third motion of no confidence lodged against him. Manele was replaced by opposition leader Matthew Wale, who assumed the role on May 15 after a private ballot.

PRC-Solomon Island Relations

Prior to 2019, Solomon Islands was a diplomatic partner of Taiwan. The reelection of Sogavare as prime minister precipitated a months-long foreign policy review that

resulted in a diplomatic switch to the PRC, citing the Solomons' development needs as motivation.

In 2022, the Solomon Islands and the PRC signed a bilateral security agreement that allowed for the potential deployment of PRC security forces in the Solomons to maintain "social order" at the request of the government. Some officials in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand voiced concern that the agreement could allow China to establish a military presence in the region. The Solomons government has denied that it would permit foreign military installations in its territory and denounced criticisms of its agreement with China, claiming that it is an infringement on its sovereignty. In 2023, China and Solomon Islands signed a law enforcement agreement. Regional experts have noted no current evidence of any PRC-linked military base or dual-use facility being developed in Solomon Islands, though they also highlight concerns regarding elite capture and the expansion of social surveillance and policing methods from the PRC.

In 2025, Solomon Islands assumed the chair of the PIF, the region's primary multilateral organization, and hosted the PIF Leaders Meeting in Honiara. Before the event, the Solomons government denied a delegation from Taiwan visas for entry into the country for attendance. The decision was criticized by PIF member states that recognize Taiwan (Marshall Islands, Palau, and Tuvalu), and some analysts alleged that Beijing influenced Honiara to make that decision. To appease all sides, the PIF Leaders Meeting had none of its dialogue or development partners (including the United States, China, and Taiwan) attend the event.

Some analysts have raised questions about the future of PRC-Solomons relations given Wale's past criticisms of the 2002 security agreement. During a visit to Australia in 2026, he stated he planned to conduct a "review" of the agreement, but cannot legally release the text language publicly. The prime minister also reportedly has floated the idea of a Pacific-wide security agreement as well as a "comprehensive treaty" with Australia. However, analysts note that it is unlikely that Wale would completely sever ties with Beijing.

U.S.-Solomon Islands Relations

Recent U.S. Administrations have sought to expand U.S. engagement with the PICs, including the Solomon Islands, with an eye toward the PRC's growing involvement in the region. This has included U.S. Coast Guard exchanges, international training courses to Solomon Islands national security officials, and humanitarian support through Pentagon exercises like Pacific Partnership, the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster management preparedness mission in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. non-security foreign assistance to Solomon Islands historically has included disaster risk reduction, agribusiness, and public health programs, including a 2022 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) program to address natural resource management and economic growth. In FY2024, the United States obligated \$4.4 million in foreign assistance to Solomon Islands.

The Biden Administration reopened U.S. Embassy Honiara in 2023 as part of a larger bid to expand the U.S. diplomatic presence in the region. Prior to the embassy reopening, a U.S. delegation visited Honiara and warned that the United States would "respond accordingly" to any PRC military presence in the Solomon Islands.

Under the second Trump Administration, former Prime Minister Manele met with Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau in Honolulu on the sidelines of a U.S.-hosted Pacific Investment Summit. The United States Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and Solomon Islands signed a 2026 Investment Incentive Agreement to expand private-sector-led economic cooperation. The United States offered emergency disaster assistance to Solomon Islands following Tropical Cyclone Maila which hit the region in April 2026.

Legacies of War

The continued presence of UXO from WWII remains an ecological and human safety hazard. Between 2011 and 2022, the United States has provided \$6.8 million towards establishing a national capacity within the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to identify and destroy explosive remnants of war. In 2022, the Department of State provided \$1 million to launch a UXO removal project, and in 2024, the U.S. Marine Corps participated in the largest edition of Australian-led Operation Render Safe 2024-2 to remove UXO from Solomon Islands.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has operated in partnership with the government of Solomon Islands to account for missing military personnel from WWII. In 2022, DPAA conducted its first ever underwater recovery mission in the Solomons.

Select Issues for Congress

Congressional interest in the Pacific Islands may prompt some Members to exercise greater oversight of executive branch efforts to engage with the Solomon Islands. Oversight may include requests for information on several ongoing interests in the U.S.-Solomon bilateral relationship, such as:

- The Trump Administration's potential nomination for the position of U.S. Ambassador to Solomon Islands;
- the proposed Shiprider agreement for enhanced maritime security cooperation;
- the possible reestablishment of a Peace Corps presence in Solomon Islands;
- U.S. implementation of DFC and MCC projects;
- Efforts to identify potential infrastructure development projects in Solomon Islands through organizations such as DFC and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency;
- and opportunities for educational and public health diplomacy, as Solomon Islands continues to face threats from malaria and dengue fever.

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